Howay, the Jae!

Well then... here we jolly well go, eh? It's a fairly unusual experience for me, I can tell you, and for a number of reasons: (1) Promotion, by golly. After the oblivion of Hellblazer [one in-house ad in four years] and Werewolf [not sure, but I think Ralph mentioned it to someone he knows at the pub once], I finally get the Wizard treatment, good and proper. Joe, Nancy, Jimmy... I love yez. Not sure about this whole palaver, actually, since my mum hits me whenever I get fan mail, just to put me in my place. Still, I look forward to speaking with inane fans at conventions. Or, at least, hiding behind you while you do so. (2) Superheroes, by gum. Lots of odd people flying about in their underwear, which is the way people really would behave if they could fly. I mean, if I could fly, I'd go bareass naked and buzz the White House. So now, I get to play for awhile and think about all possible lingerie combinations. Karnak in a loose-fitting little number? What fun.

Just to reiterate the theme I mentioned in our phone conversation of the other day, this first issue is both a guided tour of the marvelous city of Attilan and a sneaky look into the mind of one of the most powerful characters in the Marvel pantheon: Black Bolt. With his bodysuit of shimmering ebon and a bloody great big tuning fork stuck in the middle of his head, our boy flits from venue to venue, acting regal and otherworldly and stoic without so much as a thought given to fashion sense. In a way, we're going to be setting him up as a sort of Icarus figure, both literally and figuratively speaking, since it may be that his downfall will come as a result of hubris. That's "pride" for those of you watching in black and white...

So, as you go through this first issue, bear in mind just how bloody difficult it would be to keep your mouth shut. Really. Imagine someone threatened your wife or your mum, or your cat... you'd want to at least say something as you bashed aforementioned someone's head against a rock, wouldn't you? Imagine what a waste of a life it would be if you had to emotionally detach yourself from the sort of visceral experiences that everyone else is capable of enjoying. In a way, that isolates our boy, doesn't it? Me, I feel sorry for the poor sod. If I was king, I'd want to get away with practical jokes and eat what I wanted for dinner and give orders to the army and so on. So, for this first issue, let's try to have a certain air of mild despair hanging over the place, eh?

Author's note: This issue written to the strains of Mike Oldfield's "Songs of Distant Earth" and Enigma's "Le Roi est Mort," just so you know. Blimey, you can recreate the entire experience if you listen to the same CD's over and over again. Without further ado, then, read on, MacJae...

Panel 1 Okay, laddie, we're going to begin with a wonderfully serene flying sequence, just to get people in the mood. Its a sort of Icarus thing we're going to set up, as I mentioned before.

As we come in on our first page, we're looking out across the very top of the fabled city of Attilan. You mentioned that you didn't want it to be domed any longer, so your wish is my command, oh exalted one: the "dome" is now going to be the negative zone barrier that protects the city from the outside world's pollution and disease. If you look at where Attilan is supposed to be from the outside, you see only this incredible dome of negative space... a special effect-y trick of the light, which we shall get into later. Inside the city, however, the sky appears almost like normal, and it should be noted that we can see the sun somewhere in the sky. If you want to suggest that there's something odd about the place, then perhaps the N-space somehow distorts the blue sky, sending colorful little rainbow blobs across it. It would make Attilan immediately come across as very different. (We're going to make the rules very unusual in here: lots of buggering about with gravity and waterfalls and Escher-type shennanigans. People happily perambulating along upside-down walkways, little airborne hovercraft, and large, bulky ones that defy gravity. If you look back at old pictures, Jack Kirby went totally nuts with his version, as far as sci-fi stuff was concerned. I suggest we follow his template, but only to a point: I'd like to add a suggestion that we make the architecture very foreign... buildings swoop outwards to impossible angles, and so on.)

Anyway, we catch some of the tops of these impressive buildings, and perhaps the side of one such building is in our foreground. This acts as a frame, sending our eyes into the sky, where we see a single flying dot.

Caption: Imagine you could never make another sound, not for the **rest** of your life.

Caption: Not a sigh, not a yawn. Not a single word. **Ever**.

Panel 2 We close in on the dot in the sky, which is Black Bolt. He flies by the power of his mind, but swoops along with his arms out wide for reasons known only to misters Lee and Kirby. I like swooping anyway, so there you have it. Nice one, Jack and Stan...

Caption: Then, imagine you were given one chance to speak.

Panel 3 Closing in on Black Bolt, so that we see the entirety of his body in this panel. He's swooping along so serenely, with the webbing of his costume billowing out, that you'd almost get to thinking he was actually enjoying himself. The poor lad, however, has only one single expression, at least for the first 21 pages of this book. He's enigmatic, man—in a very Mona Lisa sort of way. He's just so Jesus/Godlike, it's a bit disturbing...

Caption: What would you **say**?

May 6, 2004

Panel 1 Okay, Jae... a chance to check out the wonderful city of Attilan below. Now, we are directly above Black Bolt, looking beyond him as he swoops along. (The following is suggestion, to spark your creative juices. Final version of Attilan is at your mercy, mate.) Down below, we can see the aforementioned walkways and triple spires. There are bulbous antigrav crafts hefting raw materials to be processed. Might be fun to show lightning playing around one building, so that energy crackles in the very center of this panel. The city's technology is very dense, I'd suggest, so that what we see goes down for perhaps half a mile. It's just layer upon layer of escalators and roadways and buildings in this section. Other sections will be different—this is Attilan's Manhattan, where the entire place is "Altered Earth New York City."

What dominates below, however, is a circular platform about a quarter of a mile across that is a park. There are various Attilans on this raised dais, wandering around on the grass and along the pathways. We can see a small body of water, some fountains, what have you.

Caption: What would you say to the people of **Attilan**—this marvelous, isolated metropolis at the edge of human awareness—if you were their king?

Panel 2 Looking down at some of the people in the park as if we're taking a snapshot of them, unawares. We're in a central area by a waterfall. The waterfall is odd in that it flows upwards, splashes into a strategically placed rock and splashes back downwards again. It's more antigravity at work, kids.

The people are, of course, going to be incredibly diverse. Here, a female reptilian creature walks hand in hand with a man who seems to glow at the end of each of his limbs. The man resembles your typical "Communion" Whitley Strieber alien, so he's a bit disturbing as well. There are more humanoids than any other form, but everyone seems quite unique. If you like, one person here might have extra limbs, and walks on them like a Daddy Long Legs.

It's all hustle and bustle at the center of the park, with this incongruous group of people. Someone pushes a baby stroller that glides along through the air.

Caption: Your subjects are powder kegs of genetic potential, primed to detonate upon exposure to the Terrigen mists.

Caption: Each of them is truly **unique**—a subspecies of one.

Panel 3 Moving away to where there are less people. In our foreground, a little child of about eight years old—therefore unchanged—is pointing up into the sky. The child is holding his daddy's hand. Daddy is a big, lumpy creature that looks extremely odd and alien next to his son. Mum (mom) might be a little wispy

and pretty humanoid lady, if you want to show her. We're showing here the diversity in any given Attilan family.

The child is pointing at Black Bolt, who flies above.

Caption: Here, **diversity** is the rule of nature. Beings of pure energy mingle with shape-changers and dragons. To emerge from the mists transformed into a chimera is to **conform**.

Panel 4 We're a few feet in the air, now looking down at the child as if from Black Bolt's angle. The child is excited to see his king flying above, and rather awestruck. He's still holding daddy's hand, but looking intently at us or past us. The kid's jaw is open...

Caption: So how do you govern these **Inhumans**—who are so divided by their **individuality**?

Panel 1 Pulling away from a group of people, including the kid. They are shading their eyes to look up at us. Perhaps one adult is pointing BB out to another person nearby. Everyone has stopped, it seems, excited to see their king. Some are chatting animatedly...

Caption: You are their model of stoic consistency—their father, mother, priest and teacher. You have the capacity to destroy utterly, and to create profusely.

Panel 2 Black Bolt has flown further from this built-up area of Attilan, so that he's now over relative Brooklyn. Here, the techno city isn't half a mile deep, so that people are actually walking on the ground. The buildings have spread out, suggesting that this is the area where most people make their homes. If you close your eyes tightly here in suburbia, you can just imagine some spotty little Attilan teenager asking dad if he can borrow the truck.

Caption: In such a place as Attilan, abnormality means **power**. Power affords status, which is why you are king.

Panel 3 We're out of the city, pretty much. Black Bolt is a distant speck, albeit still visible. This is the section where Attilan meets the sea at a beautiful cove. Near us, water splashes against some rocks. I think it'd be very cool if we can show some sort of water-dwelling creature at work or play out here, Jae. Actually, you think it'd be out of order to show the back of some huge Nessie-like beast that's about to dip below the waves? I mean, fucking enormous.

Caption: You are the **most** powerful—an aberration of an anomaly who has **never** been defeated in battle.

Panel 4 Okay, man... here, we show our hero framed by the sun. It's meant to evoke thoughts of Icarus and what have you, so there's no particular need for subtlety. With arms spread wide, Black Bolt soars. His form is somewhat obliterated by the intense corona of the sun.

Caption: You are so far removed from average that you seem **more** than inhuman.

Panel 5 Another part of town altogether—a pretty dark and decrepit place, actually. As Black Bolt begins to come lower in the sky, we come across an ominous sight: the outskirts of town are a bit ghetto-ized. We see a very human-looking individual who simply sits on something, looking at his feet. Although he might be drunk for all we can tell. Here, there is less technology and everything's a bit scummy. Maybe there's the equivalent of trash on the streets here...

perhaps some pretty unsavory individuals. There might be an Inhuman version of an ale house, and a couple of drunken sots outside laughing it up. What d'you think... would Inhumans have cats and dogs? A suspicious-looking cat perched on a fence would ground this place in reality, wouldn't it?

Whatever the case, this is the rough end of town.

Caption: Like a necessary God.

<u>Panel 1</u> We're up with Black Bolt again, and he's coming in to land. Ahead of him, we can see the building he's approaching, which is the jail where he keeps his looney brother, Maximus. If we can see much of it, it's like the maze of Knossos, in Crete.

There's a pavement leading up to the entrance of this fortified building, which is on the outskirts of town. It's a pretty normal, block of a building. In fact, there's even an armed guard or two out front... one each side of the open entrance to the building.

Caption: You might well speak of the <u>**irony**</u> in this. But to do so would result in <u>**catastrophe**</u>.

<u>Panel 2</u> Holding his arms out wide, Black Bolt lands gently a few yards from the entrance. He's pretty graceful, landing on one foot.

Caption: Because your voice is so resonant that it reaches into some nameless, distant sonic range. Your slightest whisper has the power to level mountains.

<u>Panel 3</u> Same POV. Black Bolt folds his wings, having fully landed. Beyond, the guards hold their weapons to attention...

Caption: In truth, your people would scarcely hear your words...

<u>Panel 4</u> As Black Bolt walks regally into the front entrance of the jail, the two guards bow deeply to their king. It's a little absurdly formal, perhaps, but an indication of the esteem in which the people of Attilan hold their regent.

Caption: ... before the impact tore them into a million pieces.

Sonic Youth

Paul Jenkins	Writer
Jae Lee	Artist
Brian Haberlin	Colorist
Richard Starkings & Comicraft	Letterer
Joe Quesada, Jimmy Palmiotti	Editors
Nanci Dakesian	Managing Editor

May 6, 2004

Bob Harras Editor In Chief

May 6, 2004

<u>Panel 1</u> Right, lad... this is a page you and I have talked about—we're going to visit the dark and dingy room where Maximus plies his evil trade. I'm suggesting three panels above, with the fourth as a larger bleed below. If you want to do it in more or less panels, be my guest. We just chop off a finger for each time you fuck up, that's all...

Anyway, we are looking at the looney bugger form the side-on in silhouette here. Maximus sits on a sort of office chair—one that has arms so's he can lean on them. He's looking at his feet, presumably thinking about escape plans and the price of fish. The room's pretty dark, 'cause that's the way Maximus likes it. A little hokey, perhaps, but it gets the point across.

No dialogue

<u>Panel 2</u> Still, Maximus looks at the ground. We can see he has a primitive, wooden-framed mirror in front of him in the room. The free standing mirror is his only company these days, the poor sod. We can see his reflection in the glass, since we're looking from just behind him.

No dialogue

<u>Panel 3</u> Slowly, Maximus begins to raise his head. (Y'know, when I think of this character, I always think of Nero, the Roman Emperor. What do you say to giving him rather full lips, a weakish chin, etc?)

No dialogue

<u>Panel 4</u> And now, the fucker is looking directly at us, albeit in a strained way out the top of his head. (You know... his head is slightly lowered still, and he's looking up at us. It's always unnerving, that is.) I should point out that even though Max appears to be looking up at us, we're looking at him from the angle of the mirror. He only ever talks to the mirror, y'see.

Max is either wet or sweating profusely... probably the latter. He is quite clearly off his rocker, even judging from this very first picture of him. Maximus grins, evilly, like the devil himself...

Maximus: I know you're <u>**there**</u>, brother.

Panel 1 Okay, Jae... a smallish panel that shows Black Bolt as seen through an entire glass wall. This, I suppose, is an observation window, where the patient or prisoner is allowed to see the person they're talking to. Black Bolt, however, has chosen to keep his viewing room dark. It almost seems as though he wishes to hide in the shadows, and perhaps this tells us something about him. He's almost hidden, even more so because his outfit is black. That reserved silence of his is fucking maddening...

No dialogue

Panel 2 Now, we get the idea that Maximus is actually only talking to the mirror. His expression can change at any given second, from anger to calm to hilarity to sadness. And Max never does anything by halves, either... if he laughs, it's from the depths of his soul. His expressions and gestures are generally overdone, 'cause he's always playing to the crowd. Even if the only crowd is himself.

Max leans back in his chair, as if suddenly slightly amused at something or other. He rests his head in his hand in a very eccentric fashion, just to be a loon.

Maximus: There's something on your mind, **isn't** there? I can always tell.

Maximus: Unless you dropped by just to pass the time of day. Heaven **forfend**...

Panel 3 Closing in on Black Bolt, still hidden partially in the shadows of the observation room. Black Bolt's expression, of course, hasn't changed at all, so he's an interesting contrast to his brother. Even though his face is probably mostly in darkness for the purposes of this scene, you know exactly what he looks like, but you never know what he's thinking. Perhaps, Jae, his mouth comes just slightly open. Could it be he wants to say something?

Caption: What do you say to your brother, **Maximus**—this twisted and remorseless lunatic to whom you are bound by the laws of fate and family?

Panel 4 Looking at Max from another POV. Since we left him, Max seems to have had a sudden brain aneurysm, for Christ's sake. He's suddenly squeezing his head very hard with both palms, all the while looking at himself in the mirror. Therefore, Max's eyes are sorta squeezed and pulled and narrowed. I mean, he's off his bloody rocker.

Caption: How do you communicate with a man whose mind resonates on a plane twice removed from reality?

Panel 5 Still looking at Max, who is still squeezing his temples with his palms. Perhaps we close in, perhaps we move to a different angle, perhaps we can see the observation room and Black Bolt behind Max. (Max has never looked round. Then again, maybe he sees his brother in the mirror.)

Caption: Are there words enough to satisfy a cannibal of the **heart**?

Panel 1 Max now leans forwards in his chair, and again, his expression changes. He's now pretending to be very interested in his imaginary self's day. He's suddenly absorbed in a casual conversation with himself, although the words are all directed at Black Bolt.

Maximus: mm? Oh... I'm enjoying my time here **immensely**, thank you for asking. So tell me, Blackagar, how have **you** been?

Panel 2 More of Max speaking. He leans back, elbows resting on the armchair, and clasps his hands. This is a wonderful conversation he's having with himself...

Maximus: Hehh... ah. That's a rhetorical question, of course, so I'd prefer if you didn't answer it **directly**. After all, we wouldn't want a repeat of that other unpleasantry, now would we?

Panel 3 Extreme close up of Max's face. He closes his eyes and smiles as he throws another couple of barbed taunts his brother's way.

Maximus: And don't pretend you don't understand what I'm talking about... **you** know...

Panel 4 And now, with Max's words appearing in a caption box above, we are shown an horrific image. We are looking at the rubble of an obliterated building, with little bits of burning stuff all over the place. Amongst the rubble, a woman (their mum) is lying face down and dead. If you like, she can be on fire, or her clothes burning, at least. We can see her only as clearly as the code permits, I guess, but let's try to make it somewhat shocking, eh? From under a piece of rubble, a hand protrudes... the hand of Agon, the boys' now deceased father. It's all a bit of a clusterfuck, really. Something to do with Kree drunken driving and sonic booms and, well... read on and you'll get the picture. Suffice to say, we delve yet again into Greek tragedic devices. (Somewhere along the way someone always eats their father, plonks their mother and offends the bloody Gods by worshiping the wrong turnip. Daft bleedin' Greeks...)

Max (Caption): "... I mean that time you murdered our **parents**."

<u>Panel 1</u> Right, lad... this page is a flashback to events that took place when Black Bolt was a fresh-faced nineteen year-old. It's a retelling of an old story, so by the time you get this, someone might have dredged up the reference.

**Note: Joe, Nancy... this is the reminder you asked for. Since we couldn't track down the reference for this bit, it needs to be run by Bob for the sake of accuracy, and amended if necessary.

As we come in, we're in the middle of some conflict or other. Maximus stands on a building, looking insane, gesticulating wildly as a Kree ship takes off into the sky. Black Bolt himself is chained, and cannot break free.

Max (Caption): "It wasn't my fault—I didn't **<u>ask</u>** you to be there when the Kree came. You and that intractable, insufferable **<u>conscience</u>** of yours.

<u>Panel 2</u> Closing in on Black Bolt, who shouts up at the ship. We're looking at him as he delivers a sonic blast into the air.

Beyond, Max grabs at his head in extreme pain.

Max (Caption): "You just couldn't leave me to my little *faux pas,* could you? You had to say something...

<u>Panel 3</u> Wham! The Kree ship breaks up in the sky, catching fire as it begins to disintegrate. The main bulk of the ship already looks as though it's falling in suspiciously space shuttle-type fashion. I give you full permission to draw in a sound effect, especially if you hide a rude word in it. "Tha-WANK!" (?)

SFX:

<u>Panel 4</u> Bakoom! (Hehh... this is fun.) Anyway, where was I? Oh yeah... bakoom.

Bakoom! The ship has landed on the royal palace, coincidentally squashing the boys' mum and dad and a very nice royal cactus called Colin. Mum and dad have legs, but not enough time to outrun the fireball that engulfs them. Poor Colin, of course, is entirely fucked. And what I want to know is why Black Bolt never felt guilty about Colin.

SFX:

<u>Panel 5</u> Looking at Black Bolt, whose jaw sorta drops in horror at what he has done. We're simply looking at his face, perhaps lit by the light of the intense fire over in the distance.

Max (Caption): "... just to bring the whole party crashing down in flames."

Panel 1 Okay... we're back in the present. You remember the last panel from page 8? Okay, we're going to show Black Bolt's face in the present, as seen from the same POV. Now, of course, he's a bit more stoic and so forth. He's in the observation booth, and slightly hidden by the shadows.

Now, his face betrays no emotion as he remembers the past. It's that same old enigmatic expression, Jae, and we begin to wonder about him a little.

No dialogue

Panel 2 Maximus is now scowling, extremely angry. He looks very frightening in this half light. Still, he jabbers on at the mirror, getting more and more worked up with each thing he says.

Maximus: I know you could speak if you **wanted** to, brother, but what would you possibly **say**?

Maximus: Would you tell everyone exactly what you did to mother and father, and run the risk of losing your precious throne?

Panel 3 Suddenly, Maximus is on his feet, and pointing right at the observation window. His face is full of venom as he suddenly lashes out at his brother. The fact that he's suddenly moved away from the mirror is doubly disconcerting.

Maximus: Well, it'd probably do you some **good** instead of standing around like a statue all day.

Maximus: You think you're fooling them, but you're not. There's a flaw, d'you hear me? A **FLAW**!

Panel 4 We're in the observation room. Black Bolt has turned, and is walking away, going past us. Through the glass we can make out the dim figure of Maximus, cursing and shouting and carrying on.

Black Bolt doesn't register any emotion—he's simply finished with his visit, it seems.

Caption: That's it... go on. Admit to your guilt, damn you! I know you **want** to!

Panel 5 As we leave Maximus, he's now kneeling on the floor, with his face pressed right up against the mirror, babbling at his reflection again. This might be a pretty cool way to leave him, when you think about it, because when he talks about guilt, he's probably now referring to himself.

Caption: It's tearing you up inside.

May 6, 2004

Panel 1 (Jae: I suggest stacking these four panels one upon the other, as a sort of progressive view of the island outside the dome. Just a suggestion.)

Okay... we are a mile or so high above the fabled island of Atlantis. I suppose another continuity check is in order so that we can make sure of the size of the island. For the time being, I suggest it's the size of, say, Ireland. Most of what we can see here is brown, with the occasional patch of green. We're at the end of the island where Attilan lays, so we can see it's size and shape relative to the rest of the place. Basically what we're seeing, then, is a stretch of coastline that leads away over either side of the panel. Just for the sake of future possibilities, make a very small little island just off the coast, slightly removed from the mainland, about two miles out to sea from the edge of Attilan. Maybe I'll find an opportunity to use it later.

Attilan ought to be pretty frigging big, really. But we can only just see a distorted, rainbow-colored dome thingy where it stands.

Caption: When the great island of Atlantis was dredged from the sea you brought your city here.

Caption: So that your people might re-establish their roots, even though Earth's polluted air is deadly poison to all Inhumans.

Panel 2 Moving in. We're looking at the city from a vantage point out to sea, and it's pretty weird. I think we ought to make something cool out of the Negative Zone barrier that protects the city. For instance, I imagine that if you try to get through the barrier, you walk into another dimension or something, and maybe that dimension is like hell. It'd be pretty cool that if you were close enough to the barrier, you'd be able to discern the images of trapped souls, screaming their torment from within. Certainly, it'd make one hell of a warning sign.

The set up of the barriers follows my description in the captions below. I think they could be sorta distorting, so that you might even get just a vague idea of the outline of Attilan by looking through. The rainbow effect could resemble oil in water, yes?

Caption: To safeguard Attilan, a series of protective barriers was devised. Five seperate defensive systems: a trillion volt pallisade, a progressive eco-filter to scrub the rancid air.

Caption: And the ultimate fortification—a dome of impenetrable Negative space surrounding it all.

Panel 3 Outside, now on the island. Here, we are looking at an ancient Atlantean building—perhaps an amphitheatre—that is overgrown with grass. It's

structure is something different again, even though its architecture is reminiscent of Attilan. Basically, this place is very ancient and mysterious and fragile.

Caption: You peered outside, but the looming, archaic structures of Atlantis seemed unwilling to divulge their long-kept secrets.

Caption: Silent ghosts. You resolved to talk to them one day, when the time was right.

Panel 4 Moving to a different POV of the same place. We can now see something going on to one side of the amphitheatre. The Humans are here... yahoo!

The ignorant bastards are digging a quarry out of this place using a couple of enormous yellow Caterpillar excavators! They've simply torn out the side of some ancient building or other, and are going about wrecking the place to their hearts' content. We might see a few people in this, if you want. It's a very busy quarry.

Just an additional note that there are also a few Portuguese soldiers hanging around, ready to protect the workers from danger.

Caption: But before you could, the humans showed up and began fighting over the scraps.

Panel 1 We can see a couple of bored, hard-hatted workers milling about as they do their work, watever it may be. These people are miners, by the look of it, and rather unsavory miners at that. Anyway, the arrogant fuckers are just destroying the place and polluting it while they go.

Caption: Where they are arrogant, they are also noble; divisive, and yet capable of unquestioning loyalty.

Caption: They hide their compassion beneath hostility.

Panel 2 Nearby, some guys are taking a lunch break. (There can be some female workers, of course, and you must be sure to make them look like Russian shot putters.) Anyway, most of the workers are smoking heavily and laughing raucously. One guy's taking a piss against and old wall, perhaps. Either that, or someone has a cold and is coughing. Or both.

Caption: They are ozone eaters. Each of them harbors an apocalyptic array of viruses and bacterial infections, to which they have a Herculean resistance.

Panel 3 Near a large drill bit which is currently tearing into the ground at a rate of knots. Chunks of earth spill out over the side. Over the noise, a foreman shouts to a technician who is trying to make notes, despite the terrific rumbling. The impression we get is of pollution and violation.

Caption: For months now, they have been raking the ancient island for metal and minerals. International conglomerates, supported by the occupying Portuguese army.

Panel 4 Looking at a couple of Portuguese soldiers who are on guard next to some barbed wire. They are at attention, working hard as opposed to slacking off.

Caption: Whatever you say to them, it had better be **good**. Because these humans, who bring pestilence, disease and decay to your people, are **back**.

Panel 5 A larger page-wide panel. Now, we can see exactly where on Atlantis we are. As a matter of fact, we're close to the protected city of Attlian, which we can see in the background. In the foreground we can the barbed wire and warning signs and a large tank. The Portuguese soldiers are on guard here. A multilingual sign near the barbed wire tells us that there is a minefield over the

fence. We might also see the edge of a tractor or something, just to remind us why the soldiers are here.

Caption: And they're less than a mile away from your border.

Panel 1 Okay, man... a two page scene with Black Bolt's lovely wife, Medusa. Loathe as I am to describe women as objects of lust with gravity-defying tits, Medusa fits that description. I suppose you could model her on Brigitte Bardot... that'd make sense.

Anyway, as we come in, Medusa is in her dressing room with her personal servant girl whom we shall call Marista, after camarista. (Look it up. I did.) She's getting ready to retire for the night, so she might well be differently dressed than normal. Marista is Medusa's confidante and amigo, even though she's a servant. Marista is brushing her mistresses' hair, which is kinda interesting in itself. Medusa is looking at herself in a mirror.

Marista: Something troubles you, lady Medusa?

Panel 2 They continue to talk, as Medusa confides in her maid. She seems pretty agitated, but it's a lot of pillow talk, I suppose.

Medusa: It's my **husband**, Marista. Sometimes, I wonder at the weight of his responsibility.

Medusa: Perhaps I'm being ridiculous... but it's hard to see where **I** fit into it all.

Panel 3 Going around to look at both women. Marista chuckles at what she's been told, trying to cheer her boss up a little bit. Actually, this might look kinda cool.

Marista is putting the brush to one side on the table. Meanwhile, Medusa's hair is getting ready for bed by folding in on itself and tying itself up in a bun behind her head. This seems pretty normal to both women, but rather wild to us.

Marista: Isn't it the same with **all** of them, my lady?

Medusa: I suppose it is.

Panel 4 More talking. the hair is tying itself quite nicely, and Marista has grabbed another small mirror from the dressing table. Meanwhile, Medusa is still studying herself in the mirror.

Medusa: It's just... sometimes, he's capable of looking at me in such a way that I'm so completely **sure** of what he feels. Other times, he's an enigma.

Medusa: I just wish... **<u>you</u>** know... sometimes, I need more than anything to hear the words.

<u>Panel 5</u> Closing in on Medusa, who looks rather sour. Behind her, Marista is holding up the mirror so that Medusa can see the now-finished hairstyle. We don't see Marista's face—only that she's holding the mirror.

Medusa: But he **<u>can't</u>** say them. And he never **<u>will</u>**.

Panel 1 Moving into the adjacent bedroom, where we find Black Bolt, alone. He's stripped naked to the waist, and blindfolded in such a way that his face is as covered as when he wears his normal clothing. Black Bolt is doing a sort of yoga/martial arts concentration technique by standing on one foot and balancing. In fact, he's standing one the toes of one foot, since he can levitate, and his arms are held out *just so*... the poor bastard has to go through half an hour of this every night, just to make sure that he doesn't talk in his sleep.

Medusa (Caption): "Every night he goes ahead of me, to meditate **alone**. So that while he's sleeping he doesn't accidentally say something that might destroy us all.

Panel 2 Closing in. Black Bolt hasn't moved. A slight breeze blows the bedroom curtain inwards.

Medusa (Caption): "For one hour every night, Marista... to purge all the thoughts of the day from his mind.

Medusa (Caption): "Can you imagine the sheer effort of will that it takes to **force** yourself to sleep in absolute silence?

Panel 3 Closing in again, so that Black Bolt's face is in the extreme foreground. Even though his mouth betrays no expression under the blindfold, Black Bolt is sweating with the effort. Concentrating like this is very taxing, which means little or no nookie for Medusa...

Medusa (Caption): "To push away every sight and sound you've experienced, to detach yourself from even the **memory** of your emotions—"

Panel 4 Back with Medusa and Marista. Marista is holding up a nightgown for her mistress, who puts it on as she continues to bitch about her relationship. Both women are near to the door, so it seems as though Medusa's about to join her husband for the night.

Marista: Are you afraid he's going to make a mistake, my lady?

Medusa: No... **no**. But don't you see, that's the **problem**?

Medusa: It terrifies me to think that my husband can so easily close the door to his mind, and lock everything and **everyone** out.

Panel 5 Medusa pauses, and looks at the bedroom door sadly...

Medusa: Including **me**.

Panel 1 It's another day, and this time we are inside Black Bolt's court. The set up is very Jacobean, with Black Bolt and Medusa strategically placed at the end of a long room so that they can officially receive people and do courtly things. As we come in, Black Bolt shows perhaps the first spark we've seen yet that he's not a robot—his enigmatic expression might almost be taken for boredom if you take into account that he's sorta slouched down, resting his chin on one fist. With his free hand, Black Bolt absent-mindedly scratches the head of Lockjaw, the dog, who is asleep next to his master.

Looking from a different angle, we can now see that a ceremony of sorts is taking place. In Attilan, childbirth is a rare occurence, so each newborn baby is brought before the king so that he can bestow some karma on it, or whatever. The gang's all here, so we can see Gorgon and Karnak and Crystal somewhere in the picture. (Not this one, necessarily... just around.) Triton's not here, but I'll explain in a bit.

The child is being held by two ever-so-loving-and-proud parents, who get this one chance to show off to the king. Dad is a hairy, lupine individual who works on the outskirts of town in an electronics repair workshop. He's very down to earth. He's holding the little girl, who's wrapped up quite nicely, thanks very much. Mom is some sort of semi-transparent creature, albeit humanoid, and both parents are simply beaming with pride.

Dad: ... and so, we come to her **paternal** lineage, as is my duty, honor and privilege to recite, your majesty.

Dad: Um... beginning with me, obviously. And then onto my father, Grimal, **also** a carnivore...

Panel 2 Dad kneels, holding the little dudette up for Black Bolt to see. The baby begins to squawk with the strangeness of it all. If we see Medusa, she might be smiling in a very maternal fashion. Uh-oh... better check your testicles at the door, my king, 'cause you might be needing them for later.

Dad: ... whose father before him was Tauron, second cousin to Vel. Um... with whom your father dined often, as you may recall...

Panel 3 Down at the foot of the throne, lazy old Lockjaw opens one eye, disturbed for a moment by the sound of the baby. Like any dog, though, he's mildly curious as to the source of the noise, but only 'cause he wishes it'd go away.

No dialogue

Panel 4 Closing in on the (very human-looking) baby, held up for all the world to see. The little girl is now squealing at the very top of her lungs, so that her little face is going red with the effort.

Caption: What do you tell her, this child of infinite possibilities?

Panel 1 Flashback: suddenly, we are in the middle of a past conflict. Black Bolt is flying along and zooming through, while Gorgon is trying to knock the crap out of the Thing with his remarkable feet. In the meantime, the other Inhumans are having at it with other members of the FF.

Caption: Do you tell her that the world is a violent, angry place, populated by violent, angry people? That she is already misunderstood, just for the circumstances of her birth?

Panel 2 Another scene from the past. This time, Black Bolt is facing off with his looney brother, Maximus. At the same time, a couple of hundred Alpha Primitives are spilling out of the bowels of the city, while things explode in the background. (These scenes are all taking place in the mind's eye, Jae. They are Black Bolt's recollections of a very mad world.)

Caption: That her home could collapse at any moment under the whim of a mad pretender to the throne?

Panel 3 A larger panel. Um. Now, we're on the moon. Rather disconcertingly, old Galactus is filling up the sky in the background while he admonishes Earth about one thing or another. I dunno... doesn't he show up and blow up planets that aren't worthy, or something? I suggest, then, that he looks a mite annoyed.

Near us a couple of Attilans are pointing up into the sky, aghast.

Caption: That the universe is a cup of danger which can spill over at any second?

Panel 4 Looking at the little baby, held in her daddy's arms. The father is still kneeling, but now looking up at us expectantly, so we can assume we're back in the present and seeing things from Black Bolt's POV.

No dialogue

Panel 5 Black Bolt holds his hand up in some silent show of acknowledgement. The baby is still central to our picture, but Black Bolt approves of the little child. Thank Christ for that, I say, 'cause if he disapproves then the child is served for dinner with a plum wine sauce. Just kidding again...

Caption: How do you explain all of **that**?

Panel 1 Yahoo! Okay, man... my favorite scene of this book, the one with Karnak and Gorgon. Now, I happen to think Karnak is one of the coolest comic characters ever next to the Silver Surfer (wild dude with an intergalactic surfboard? I gotta get some of Stan the Man's acid!) and Batman (a hard bastard with a deathwish, in my opinion.). Anyway, I want to accomplish a couple of things with this scene: (1) the major revelation about Black Bolt, which we'll get to in a second and (2) a basic description of how Karnak intuits the inherent flaw in people, places and things. It's gonna be cool, I am so excited. Splurp! Sorry.

Anyway, as we come in, Karnak and Gorgon are hanging about in the main banquet hall, where there is going to be a very large feast later on. For the moment, everything is in preparation, and old Gorgon is going about the business of getting pleasantly drunk. He and Karnak are at the far end of the table from the head chair, which is where Black Bolt will sit. There's enough room for, say, sixteen people at the table. One chair is quite remarkable, if we see it—it's where old Triton must sit. (Now, I also really like Triton, and we're going to treat him in rather a sympathetic way. Triton's a bit of an oddball, even by Inhuman standards... he needs to be kept wet if he is out of the water for any given length of time, so he has this special chair for banquets that sprays him with a continual mist of seawater. I also think the poor sod has a little trouble communicating, 'cause he's very old fashioned, but that's a story for another time.)

Anyway... back to the fray. Like I said, Gorgon is having a rollicking old time of it, drinking up all the beer before he's supposed to. He would've made a great Viking warrior, 'cause he likes living and fighting and partying. He ain't such a bad sort... in fact, he's going to have quite the sense of humor about him, I think. As we see him here, he's slurping down some ale with one hand and holding up a half full jug with the other. Beer slops over the side.

Karnak's glass sits, untouched, at the end of the table near to where Gorgon is sitting. Karnak himself is standing at a window about ten yards away at the end of the room. He has his arms behind his back, and is looking outside across the city. Outside, it's early evening and raining against the window pane...

Gorgon: ... and the goat says "I don't know, but the one in the middle is definitely a **shapechanger**!"

Panel 2 Looking at Gorgon, who fills his glass up again with ale. It's a wild party of one, and his eyes sorta give the game away. We like him for this, though...

Gorgon: A shapechanger! Ah-hehh... Ha ha ha!

Panel 3 (If you want, add a silent panel, where Gorgon waits for a reaction but doesn't get one.)

(Laughs fades into a nervous whimper)

Panel 4

Gorgon rests his drunken head on the table and blearily looks at Karnak's glass which just sits there. Suddenly, the glass is all-consuming to old Gorgon, who is a bit all-consuming himself. Gorgon sorta lazily looks at the glass with one eye open, and makes an offhanded comment.

Gorgon: Hmff... there's a **crack** in your glass, Karnak.

Panel 5 Okay... first of all, I suggest that we have some sort of inset panel inside this panel, which is pretty big. The inset panel is an extreme close up of Karnak's eyes, which glow with an intense inner light. We've never seen them before, but you and I have talked about them, Jae.

As to the main panel, we are now outside the window, looking in at Karnak. He remains motionless, and like Black Bolt, his expression wavers very little. We can see the entire window pane, which fills up just about the entire panel, and we can see the glass in "Karnak vision." That is, we're looking at the flaws in the pane of glass between us and Karnak. A bunch of "invisible" cracks all converge at one single point—presumably, where one might push and have the window shatter. (Not sure how you want to show this... perhaps as whisper-thin little lines in the glass that glow?)

Panel 6

Karnak: I **know**.

Panel 1 Gorgon now sits up, in our foreground, and looks directly over at his best buddy. In a way, he's goading Karnak a little, but in a relatively good-natured way. Karnak hasn't moved; he remains at the window, looking out across the city, as if he's waiting for something to happen.

Gorgon: I don't understand you, brother. You've been at that window for an hour now. You **know** how I hate it when somebody lets their ale get warm.

Gorgon: I'm serious. If you don't come over here right this minute, I'm going to **drink** it—

Panel 2 Gorgon continues, gently chiding his buddy. Karnak's his best friend, so he clearly feels he can say anything, and we can tell that Karnak doesn't seem to mind. Gorgon's fairly hammered, of course.

Karnak is turning, interrupting Gorgon.

Karnak: I'm worried about our king.

Panel 3 Gorgon erupts with laughter, thinking the whole thing is a little bit ridiculous. In so doing, Gorgon spills some of his beer.

Gorgon: You... **worried**? Ah hehh! You are a reprehensible being, dear Karnak.

Panel 4

Gorgon: If I didn't know any better from watching you, I'd swear you were irrevocably **drunk**. If so, the world would never make sense to me again.

Panel 5 Gorgon is looking drunkenly down at the table and chuckling to himself at the thought of his staid brother having some reservations about Black Bolt. To him, the whole idea is quite preposterous.

Beyond, we can see that Karnak is wandering over to the table, coming towards us.

Gorgon: And about **him**, too... I never thought the day would come. In all the years I've known you, Karnak, you have never once so much as raised an eyebrow at the motives of our king.

Gorgon: Of all people, **<u>your</u>** loyalty to Black Bolt is beyond question. So tell me... what troubles you?

<u>Panel 6</u> Close up of Karnak, who is troubled. He looks down at his feet as he begins to explain.

Karnak: A **<u>secret</u>**, Gorgon. Something that I have never told **<u>anyone</u>**.

Panel 1 Even closer to Karnak. Really, we're concentrating on the lad's eyes, which again seem possessing an inner fire. As he launches into his explanation of the way things work, we almost detect his internal flaw-sensing mechanism going to work. It's pretty weird, and very cool...

Karnak: To interpret the secret, you must know what I know. You must understand my... **gift**.

Panel 2 Flashback: We are with Karnak, who stands in front of a metal door with his hand held lightly towards it. We are shown things in Karnak-vision, so we can see what Karnak senses.

Okay, so... he's in front of the door, about to break it down, trying to pick out its weak spot. Like the window earlier, we see the flaws running through the door and converging at one point.

Karnak (Caption): "In everything, there hides a **flaw**—be it structural, geological, psychological. To me, these flaws appear like beacons that guide the way to weakness.

Panel 3 Another flashback: Now, the Inhumans are battling against a tremendous amphibian creature. It towers above them, and while some of the regular crew keep it busy, Karnak's in our foreground, sensing the creature's weakness. Same rules apply.

Karnak (Caption): "The cracks appear at the periphery of my awareness, to be intuited... interpreted.

Karnak (Caption): "It matters not the size of the structure, nor the material from which it is made. Everything has an imperfection that can be traced to one single point and exploited."

Panel 4 Back in the room. Gorgon deosn't seem too impressed. In fact, he's pretty sure he's flawless—typical Gorgon. Despite his mild protestation, Karnak is quite firm in his conviction.

Gorgon: Hmph. Are you saying that I am anything less than perfect, Karnak?

Karnak: **Everything** has a flaw, brother. Everything and **everyone**.

Panel 5 Close up of Karnak again. He admits the big secret.

Karnak: Except for Black Bolt.

Panel 1 Flashing away for a second as Karnak's words continue in caption. We are at some royal gathering or other that takes place in the streets of Attilan. Here, Black Bolt and Medusa and the others are making a public appearance on some kind of raised dais. It's like the ethereal Nuremberg rallies, 'cause just about every single Attilan is in attendance. Everyone's cheering and carrying on.

Black Bolt just stands, emotionless, whereas Medusa and others wave to the crowd. But we can see that Karnak is standing nearby and slightly behind everyone else, his arms crossed, scrutinizing his regent very closely.

Karnak (Caption): "I have studied him constantly. He is surrounded by chaos and inconsistency, yet he gives no indication that it affects him in any way.

Karnak (Caption): "In all the time I've known him, he has never once wavered from his impossible duty."

Panel 2 Back in the present. Gorgon seems to have sobered up immensely—he taken Karnak's revelation very seriously indeed, and he looks mildly shocked. Karnak has now taken his glass of ale and is looking down at the liquid inside, avoiding making eye contact with Gorgon. You get the feeling that he's a bit guilty for spilling the beans...

Gorgon: And do you now detect flaws?

Karnak: No. No... but I **should**.

Panel 3 Karnak holds up his glass to the light so that he can study it some more. He is extremely serious.

Karnak: Entropy is the way of the universe, Gorgon. One day, the cracks are going to appear—they **must**.

Panel 4 Final close up of Karnak's face. He is grim indeed.

Karnak: And when they do, I fear for us all.

Panel 1 Okay, mate... our final scene of this first book, and it takes place in the same banquet hall. As we come in, it is now nighttime. We're some way away from the banquet room, outside the window, looking in. There are lights on inside, and it seems as though the dinner is in full swing. We can only see the hustle and bustle of the party, etc.

And guess what? Gorgon's voice appears from inside the room. The daft bastard is telling the same crappy joke that he told earlier.

Voice (inside): ... and the goat says "I don't know, but the one in the middle is definitely a **shapechanger**!"

Panel 2 As we come inside, we now see the banquet is humming along. A couple of Alpha Primitives are glumly wandering around with serving plates, and maybe old Lockjaw is over in the corner somewhere, snoozing off a plate of pork. It'd be nice if Black Bolt were feeding him under the table, but I don't think he'd fit.

Anyway... Gorgon finishes up his joke to a mixed reaction. Next to him, Karnak is simply dabbing at the edge of his mouth with his napkin, leaving his plate of food pretty much intact. Whereas Gorgon's food is all over the shop, Karnak's part of the table is wonderfully neat and tidy. To the other side of Gorgon is a merchant-type fellow, quite human in appearance, a little bit like a fat old Viking. The merchant snorts with laughter.

However, we can see Lady Crystal on the other side of the table, and perhaps a couple of other people. Crystal looks pretty pissed off at Gorgon... others look slightly shocked at the drunken bastard's antics. It's actually kinda funny, when you think about it. (Um... remember that Gorgon and co. are at the far end of the table from Black Bolt, okay?) Basically, all eyes turn towards Gorgon as he makes his faux pas.

Gorgon: A shapechanger! Ha ha ha!

Merchant: Hphsss... Ha ha ha!

Panel 3 We are looking at Triton, who sits in his special chair over the table from Gorgon. Like I said, the chair sprays a mist of water over Triton, who is very different from the others in both the way he thinks and the way he acts. He has a tube running under his nose, similar to one you might find delivering oxygen to an emphysema patient.

Anyway... Triton looks across the table (directly at us, I suppose) and gently admonishes his drunken cousin. He's very similar to the Creature from the Black Lagoon, Jae... I'd like to make his lips very fishlike, and give him lidless eyes. Whatever... he's the oddest of an odd bunch.

*Note: let's give Triton a special font and word-balloon, okay?

Triton: Cousin Gorgon, well **know** you not ribaldry so close to ears of the king. Well known to **anybeing**, for if he laugh...

Triton: Tsk. **Shame** to you, for the risk you demolish us all—

Panel 4 Looking at Medusa, who is sitting at this end of the table. Now, she pipes in—not to admonish Gorgon, but to admonish Triton. She is stern—a little too stern, we might think.

Medusa: Though my husband is incapable of speech, cousin Triton, I can assure you that his **hearing** is very acute.

Medusa: I would remind you that he is present at this table and would prefer not to be spoken about as if he isn't here.

Panel 5 Poor Triton looks extremely crestfallen and begins to apologize. And with that, Lady Crystal takes his side and a right royal argument begins...

Triton: If it pleasing your Majesty... this being am poor foolish. I humble apologise.

Crystal: Hey! Don't you pick on poor Triton, sister. He can't help it if he's **different**... he doesn't know how to **say** things.

Panel 6 ... because the next thing you know, the entire thing erupts. Suddenly, Gorgon is to his feet and shouting drunkenly at Crystal, who is shouting back and pointing at him. Medusa, if we can see her, looks angry. Triton looks embarrassed, and others are either joining in or looking shocked. Just like my bloody family, really...

Gorgon: Hpmh! I may be smashed groggy, but at least I know my **place**, impetuous child.

Panel 7

Crystal: I have the deepest respect for you, cousin Gorgon, but sometimes you can be such a bloated old oaf.

Panel 1 Now, we go down to the other end of the table to see Black Bolt's reaction to everything. Guess what? He's just sitting there like a lemon, taking it all in. Poor sod is pretty good at being royal, really, 'cause he looks like he's got a pole up his arse. For his reaction think "emotionally detached."

Again, that enigmatic look plays across his face.

Caption: What would you say, if you could only say just one simple phrase for the rest of your life?

Panel 2 Over at the other end, world war three has broken out. Crystal, being a wilful sort of girl is throwing a glass of beer in Gorgon's face. The merchant ducks as it splashes all over everything. Others are joining in, as before.

Caption: What would you tell the people around you who are your subjects, your cousins, your allies?

Panel 3 A very small panel in which Karnak's hand calmly folds his napkin at one edge.

Lockjaw: Rrr

Panel 4 Over at the edge of the room, or wherever he is, Lockjaw bares his teeth in a growl. He doesn't like the atmosphere in the room—especially because it's too bloody noisy.

SFX: ptui

Panel 5 Gorgon's looking a bit embarrassed and shocked as beer drips off him and onto the table and floor. He looks at his arms, which are dripping wet. Beyond, Medusa is still fuming, her arms crossed.

SFX: (Crinkle)

Panel 6 Another very small panel, pulling away. Karnak folds another corner of his napkin.

Crystal: Sorry.

Panel 7 Looking at Crystal, who looks very satisfied at the result of her bravery. Poor old Triton, sitting next to her, looks nervously up at her. He's a bit of a drip, is the best description.

Caption: What would you say?

May 6, 2004

Panel 1 Okay, man... for the last page we are going to zoom in on Black Bolt, who is sitting at the other end of the table. The last panel is larger than these three at the top, okay?

In this first panel, we are just behind Medusa's chair, looking down the entire length of the table. Gorgon and Crystal are either side of the table, pointing at each other and shouting. There are various other arguments breaking out, too. So much for a nice dinner.

Black Bolt hasn't moved at the other end of the table. The Alphas stand calmly to one side now, waiting for the lunacy to subside...

Caption: Just one thing...

Panel 2 Now, Karnak is in our foreground. he holds his napkin in front of him on the table, neatly folded, while chaos reigns all around him. Rather than join in, he is studying the reaction of his king, who still hasn't moved.

So, it's a sort of fisheye lens shot as we look down the length of the table at Black Bolt. Karnak sends our gaze that way, despite the fact that everything's going nuts around him.

Caption: ... and you'd shout it across the world so that everyone could hear:

Panel 3 Closing in on Black Bolt, who betrays absolutely no emotion. Is he bored? Angry? Tired?

No dialogue

Panel 4 And finally, we are very close to Black Bolt. For the first time, we are given a glimpse of something other than emotional detachment in this enigmatic man's face.

Very slowly, at the edge of his mouth there is a slight turn. As he decides what he'd say, Black Bolt allows himself a tiny little smile...

Caption: **Relax**.